

Social Factors Enhancing Students' Positive Attitudes toward Entrepreneurial Intention: An
Exploratory Study

*(Faktor-Faktor Sosial yang Meningkatkan Sikap Positif Pelajar Terhadap Niat Keusahawanan: Satu
Kajian Penerokaan)*

AZMAN ISMAIL*, HIDAYATI ERNIDA HASSAN AZAHARI & SAIDA FARHANAH
SARKAM

ABSTRACT

Entrepreneurship intention amongst students had become a major debate since the 2000s when university students were encouraged to create their own employment instead of being employed. Students' attitude toward entrepreneurship intention is influenced by social factors, namely subjective norm and role model. Although this relationship has been extensively studied, the role of social factors as an important determinant is less discussed in the entrepreneurship education research literature. Thus, this study was undertaken to evaluate the relationship between social factors and students' positive attitudes toward entrepreneurial intention. A survey method was employed to collect data from economic and business students at a Malaysian public research university. The outcomes of the analysis revealed that social factors act as an important determinant of students' positive attitudes toward entrepreneurial intention in an organization.

Keywords: subjective norm, role model, students' attitudes, entrepreneurial intention

ABSTRAK

Niat keusahawanan dalam kalangan pelajar menjadi isu perdebatan sejak tahun 2000 apabila pelajar universiti digalakkan untuk mencipta pekerjaan, dan bukan menjadi pekerja kepada majikan. Sikap pelajar terhadap niat keusahawanan dipengaruhi oleh faktor sosial, iaitu norma subjektif dan suri teladan. Walaupun hubungan tersebut telah dikaji secara meluas, peranan faktor sosial sebagai pemboleh ubah yang penting masih kurang dibincangkan dalam kajian literatur pendidikan keusahawanan. Oleh itu, kajian ini dijalankan untuk menilai hubungan antara faktor sosial dan sikap positif pelajar terhadap niat keusahawanan. Kaedah kaji selidik telah digunakan untuk mengumpul data daripada para pelajar di sebuah universiti penyelidikan awam di Malaysia. Hasil kajian ini menunjukkan bahawa faktor sosial merupakan pemboleh ubah yang mempengaruhi sikap positif pelajar terhadap niat keusahawanan dalam sesebuah organisasi.

Kata kunci: norma subjektif, suri teladan, sikap pelajar, niat keusahawanan

ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION IN UNIVERSITIES

The entrepreneurship education construct originates from 'entrepreneur' whereby lecturers and higher education institutions play a new role in instilling and fostering an entrepreneurial culture to create young, educated entrepreneurs who are capable of developing new businesses based on science and technology (Ghina 2014; Turker & Selcuk 2009). This effort may be a powerful tool to generate new ideas, create jobs, discover and commercialize business opportunities, gain profitable ventures, and improve economic power in the labor market and economy as a whole (Byun, Sung, Park, & Choi 2018).

In the early development of entrepreneurship education, many higher education institutions have typically focused on the design of instructional strategies for the entrepreneurship program, such as generic objective, target audience, course content, teaching methods, institutional support, impact indicators, and course evaluations (Ghina 2014; Neck & Greene 2010; Thompson 2009). In most higher education institutions, well-designed entrepreneurship programs are offered as a bachelor's degree to undergraduate business students and electives and/or generic courses to all students. This program is useful to help young students to understand, develop, and exercise functional knowledge, skills, and techniques in constructing their characters, attitudes, and vision as productive entrepreneurs while studying in colleges and universities.

A recent review of the tertiary entrepreneurship program shows that a well-designed entrepreneurship curriculum will not be able to achieve its objective if lecturers neglect to consider the role of social factors in reshaping entrepreneurial students' mind sets in colleges and universities (Malebana & Swanepoel 2015). Many entrepreneurship and management scholars, such as Linan, Urbano, and Guerrero (2011) and Saeed, Yousafzai, and Engelen (2014) suggest that social factors consist of two major components, namely subjective norm and role model. From an entrepreneurship perspective, subjective norm is usually defined as students' normative beliefs concerning entrepreneurship as their career choice in the future (Astuti & Martdianty 2012). Meanwhile, role mode is frequently defined as entrepreneurs who set a good entrepreneurship example to students, develop students' entrepreneurship potentials, and facilitate them to become entrepreneurs as their career choice in the future (Mueller 2011; Saeed, Yousafzai, & Engelen 2014).

SOCIAL FACTORS IN STUDENTS' ATTITUDE

Unexpectedly, social factors are currently viewed as a remarkable phenomenon in the entrepreneurship higher education. Most studies about entrepreneurship education conducted in the 21st century disclosed that social factors may have a significant impact on students' positive attitudes toward entrepreneurial intention (Fretschner & Weber 2013; Soomro & Shah 2015). Student's attitude is defined as an individual's attribute, visual aspect, or private life in an improper or offensive manner while students' attitudes toward entrepreneurial intention are students' positive judgments about entrepreneurship and willingness to start a new business (Malebana & Swanepoel 2015).

Although the nature of this relationship is significant, little is known about the role of social factors as an important determinant of entrepreneurial intention in the entrepreneurship research literature. This situation may be caused by several factors. First, numerous previous studies have described the features of social factors, such as conceptual definitions, types, and importance of social factors in tertiary entrepreneurship education (Elali & Al-Yacoub 2016). Second, many previous studies used a simple correlation method to evaluate students' attitudes toward general or specific entrepreneurship education issues and the association between students' personal factors and entrepreneurial intention in various types of higher educational institutions. This correlation method is only able to determine the strength of association between two variables but neglects to emphasize the role of students' social factors in the transaction (Neck & Greene 2010; Turker & Selcuk 2009). Third, the results of those studies have only produced general findings, and this is not adequate to be used as guidelines by practitioners in understanding the difficulty of students' social factors construct and in formulating strategic action plans to enhance the effectiveness of higher education entrepreneurship programs in a global economy (Mueller 2011). Therefore, this situation simulates the researchers to fill in the gap in the literature by evaluating the effect of social factors on entrepreneurial intention.

Subjective Norms

The influence of students' social factors on their personal attitudes toward entrepreneurship education is consistent with the essence of Ajzen's (1985) Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), which posits that social norm is concerned with many social pressures from other important people, such as family, friends, and colleagues that may lead to higher positive

attitudes among individuals about certain events, such as entrepreneurship intention (Elali & Al-Yacoub 2016). The essence of this theory is consistent with the entrepreneurship education research literature. For example, Linan, Urbano, and Guerrero (2011) conducted a survey about entrepreneurship education based on a sample of 1005 undergraduate university students in Great Britain and Spain. This study found that positive subjective norms, such as family, friends, and colleagues could lead to enhanced positive attitudes toward entrepreneurship in the universities. Thus, the following hypothesis has been formulated:

- H1: Subjective norm is positively related to students' positive attitudes toward entrepreneurship intention.

Role Model

The effect of role model on students' attitudes toward entrepreneurship education is consistent with the notion of Bandura's (1986) Social Cognitive Theory, which suggests that learning from a good role model may enhance individuals' positive attitudes toward particular events, such as entrepreneurship intention (Barnir, Watson, & Hutchins 2011; Mueller 2011). The notion of this theory gained strong support from the entrepreneurship education research literature. For example, Mueller (2011) studied entrepreneurship education based on a sample of 464 students in 17 different universities in Austria, Germany, Liechtenstein, and Switzerland. The study reported that students who have high faith in entrepreneurship educational programs had more positive attitudes toward entrepreneurship intention in the respective universities. Thus, the following hypothesis has been established:

- H2: Role model is positively related to students' positive attitudes toward entrepreneurship intention.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study utilized the quantitative research design to achieve the research objectives. The context of the study was an anonymous Faculty of Business and Management in a Malaysian research university. As Malaysian students use both Malay and English

languages, the survey questionnaire was developed in both languages to enhance the validity and reliability of the research outcomes (Creswell 2014). The survey questionnaire has three major sections, which are: (i) the demographic profile of the respondent; (ii) social factors consisting of subjective norm (three items) and role model (five items); and (iii) entrepreneurial intention, comprising six items. The questions were adapted from the literature survey on social factors and entrepreneurial intention literature (Ghina 2014; Linan, Urbano, & Guerrero 2011; Maes, Leroy, & Sels 2014; Mueller 2011). These items were evaluated using a 7-item scale ranging from "strongly disagree" (1) to "strongly agree" (7). Respondent characteristics were utilized as controlling variables because this study emphasized students' attitudes.

This study utilized a convenience sampling plan to collect 130 survey questionnaires, as the sampling plan was cost-effective, time-effective, and restricted to specific respondents, which criteria was set by the researchers (Sekaran & Bougie 2013). The researchers analyzed the data by using the PLS-SEM in order to assess the validity and reliability of the instrument and to test the research hypotheses.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Most respondents were female (80.9%), in the age group of 21–25 years old (58.3%), Malay (87.8%), obtained CGPA above 3.0 (75.7%), were first year students (54.7%) and management students (27.0%), have high level of interest to be an entrepreneur (52.2%), and whose parents have started a business (58.3%).

Table 1 shows that the mean values for subjective norm, role model, and entrepreneurial intention were from 5.7768 to 5.8899, signifying that the levels of all constructs ranged from high (4) to the highest level (7). The correlation coefficients for the relationship between the independent variable (i.e., subjective norm and role model) and the dependent variable (i.e., students' positive attitudes toward entrepreneurial intention) were less than 0.90, indicating that the data were not affected by serious collinearity problem (Hair et al. 2017). The statistical result further confirms that the instrument of this study has satisfactorily met the criteria of validity and reliability analyses.

TABLE 1. Descriptive Statistics and Pearson Correlation Analysis

Variables	Mean	Standard Deviation	Pearson Correlation (r)		
			1	2	3
1. Subjective norm	5.7768	.74237	1		
2. Role model	5.8052	.74948	.558**	1	
3. Students' positive attitudes toward entrepreneurial intention	5.8899	.75312	.481**	.522**	1

Note: Correlation Value is significant at * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$
Reliability estimation is shown in the diagonal (value 1)

Table 2 shows the results of the validity and reliability analyses of the instrument. The survey questionnaires consisted of 14 items, which were associated to three constructs: subjective norm (three items), role model (five items), and students' positive attitudes toward entrepreneurial intention (six items). The factor analysis with the direct oblimin was done for all constructs. The outcomes of the factor analysis and Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin tests displayed that: first, the values of Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin for all variables were greater than 0.60 and were significant in Bartlett's test of sphericity ($p = 0.000$). This result indicates that all

constructs met the standards of sample adequacy (Hair et al. 2017). Second, the items for each variable had factor loadings of more than 0.40, and all variables had eigenvalues of larger than 1. This result indicates that all items representing each variable and all constructs satisfied the criteria of the validity analysis (Hair et al. 2017). Third, the values of Cronbach's alpha for all variables were greater than 0.70, signifying that all constructs had high internal reliability (Nunnally & Bernstein 1994). Overall, this result displays that the instrument used in this study met the criteria of validity and reliability analyses.

TABLE 2. Validity and Reliability of the Instrument

Construct	Item	Factor Loadings	KMO	Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Eigenvalue	Variance Explained	Cronbach's Alpha
Subjective norm	3	0.478 to 0.912	0.669	132.178			
				$P = 0.000$	2.305	57.637	0.767
				209.876			
Role model	5	0.568 to 0.788	0.789	$P = 0.000$	2.995	59.897	0.827
Students' positive attitudes toward entrepreneurial intention	6	0.620 to 0.892	0.867	267.968 $P = 0.000$	3.345	66.904	0.827

Table 3 shows the results of testing the research hypotheses H1 and H2. First, subjective norm was significantly associated with students' positive attitudes toward entrepreneurial intention ($\beta =$; $p < 0.001$). Therefore, H1 was supported. Second, role model was significantly correlated with students' positive attitudes toward entrepreneurial intention ($\beta =$; $p < 0.001$).

Therefore, H2 was also supported. Overall, the result confirms that subjective norm and role model are important determinants of students' positive attitudes toward entrepreneurial intention.

As an extension of testing the research hypotheses in Table 3, the values of variance inflation factor for the relationships: a) between subjective norm

and students' positive attitudes toward entrepreneurial intention was 1.452; and b) between role model and students' positive attitudes toward entrepreneurial

intention was 1.452. This value was lower than 10.0, signifying that the relationship was not affected by a collinearity problem (Hair et al. 1998).

TABLE 3. Linear Regression Analysis Results Showing the Relationship between Social Factors and Students' Positive Attitudes towards Entrepreneurial Intention

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable (Students' positive attitudes toward entrepreneurial intention)
Subjective norm	0.276**
Role model	0.368***
<i>R</i> Square	0.325
Adjusted <i>R</i> Square	0.313
<i>F</i>	26.913***

Note: Significant at ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

β = Standardized Beta

CONCLUSION

The study used the PLS-SEM to test the research hypotheses developed based on the higher entrepreneurship education research literature. The findings of the study prove the high interrelation between social factors and students' positive attitudes toward entrepreneurial intention. The result disclosed that subjective norm and role model were positively and significantly associated with students' positive attitudes toward entrepreneurial intention. Therefore H1 and H2 were supported, respectively.

The study provides three essential implications: theoretical contribution, robustness of the research methodology, and practical contribution. In terms of theoretical contribution, the findings of this study have provided great potential for understanding the effect of social factors in enhancing students' positive attitudes toward entrepreneurial intention. This result is consistent with and supports the studies by Mueller (2011) and Linan, Urbano, and Guerrero (2011).

With regard to the robustness of the research methodology, the survey questionnaire used in this study had satisfactorily met the criteria of validity and reliability analyses. It produced accurate and reliable research outcomes. Further, with respect to the practical contribution, the findings of this study are useful in providing important recommendations to encourage students to develop initial entrepreneurship talents based on science and technology. This effort may upgrade students' beliefs and commitment to become successful entrepreneurs after graduating from college or university.

This study confirms that social factors have a significant impact on entrepreneurial intention. Thus, present research and practice within entrepreneurship

education need to incorporate subjective norm and role model as core elements of the social factors domain. Future studies may include other variables and different types of universities to enrich the entrepreneurship education literature.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The authors acknowledge the support of the Faculty of Economics and Management, UKM's Tabung Khas EP-2018-001 for this research publication.

REFERENCES

- Ajzen, I., & Fishbein, M. 2000. Attitudes and the attitude-behavior relation: Reasoned and automatic processes. *European Review of Social Psychology* 11(1): 1-33.
- Astuti, R. D. & Martdianty, F. 2012. Students' entrepreneurial intentions by using Theory of Planned Behavior: The case in Indonesia. *The South East Asian Journal of Management* 6(2): 100-112.
- Bandura, A. 1986. The explanatory and predictive scope of self-efficacy theory. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology* 4(3): 359-373.
- Barnir, A., Watson, W. E. & Hutchins, H. M. 2011. Mediation and moderated mediation in the relationship among role models, self-efficacy, entrepreneurial career intention, and gender. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology* 41(2): 270-297.
- Byun, C-G., Sung, C.S., Park, J.Y., & Choi, D.S. 2018. A study on the effectiveness of entrepreneurship education programs in higher education institutions: A case study of Korean graduate programs. *Journal of Open Innovation:*

- Technology, Market, and Complexity* 4(3): 26-30.
- Creswell, J. W. 2014. *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, And Mixed Methods Approaches*. 4th Ed. California: SAGE Publication.
- Elali, W., & Al-Yacoub, B. 2016. Factors affecting entrepreneurial intentions among Kuwaitis. *World Journal of Entrepreneurship, Management and Sustainable Development* 12(1): 18-34.
- Fretschner, M., & Weber, S. 2013. Measuring and understanding the effects of entrepreneurial awareness education. *Journal of Small Business Management* 51(3): 410-428.
- Ghina, A. 2014. Effectiveness of entrepreneurship education in higher education institutions. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences* 115: 332-345.
- Hair, J. F., Hult, G. T. M., Ringle, C. M., & Sarstedt, M. 2017. *A Primer on Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling*. 2nd Ed. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publication.
- Kim, S., Ryoo, H., & Ahn, H. 2017. Student customized creative education model based on open innovation. *Journal of Open Innovation: Technology, Market, and Complexity* 3(1): 1-19.
- Linan, F., Urbano, D. & Guerrero, M. 2011. Regional variations in entrepreneurial cognitions: Start-up intentions of university students in Spain. *Entrepreneurship & Regional Development* 23(3-4): 187-215.
- Nunnally, J. C., & Bernstein, I. H. 1994. *Psychometric Theory*. 3rd Ed. New York: McGrawHill.
- Maes, J., Leroy, H. & Sels, L. 2014. Gender differences in entrepreneurial intentions: A TPB multi-group analysis at factor and indicator level. *European Management Journal* 32(5): 784-794.
- Malebana, M. J. & Swanepoel, E. 2015. Graduate entrepreneurial intentions in the rural provinces of South Africa. *Journal of Contemporary Management* 12(1): 615-637.
- Mueller, S. 2011. Increasing entrepreneurial intention: effective entrepreneurship course characteristics. *International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Small Business* 13(1): 55-74.
- Neck, H. M., & Greene, P. G. 2010. Entrepreneurship education: Known worlds and new frontiers. *Journal of Small Business Management* 49(1): 55-70.
- O'Connor, A. 2013. A conceptual framework for entrepreneurship education policy: Meeting government and economic purpose. *Journal of Business Venturing* 28: 546-563.
- Saeed, S., Yousafzai, S. Y., & Engelen, A. 2014. On cultural and macroeconomic contingencies of the entrepreneurial orientation-performance relationship. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice* 38(2): 255-290.
- Sekaran, U. & Bougie, R. 2013. *Research Methods for Business: A Skill-Building Approach*. 6th Ed. United Kingdom: John Wiley & Sons Ltd.
- Soomro, B. A. & Shah, N. 2015. Developing attitudes and intentions among potential entrepreneurs. *Journal of Enterprise Information Management* 28(2): 304-322.
- Thompson, E. R. 2009. Individual entrepreneurial intent: Construct clarification and development of an internationally reliable metric. *Entrepreneurship: Theory and Practice* 33(3): 669-694.
- Turker, D., & Selcuk, S.S. 2009. Which factors affect entrepreneurial intention of university students? *Journal of European Industrial Training* 33(2): 142-159.
- Walter, S.G., & Block, J.H. 2016. Outcome of entrepreneurship education: An institutional perspective. *Journal of Business Venturing* 31: 216-233.

Azman Ismail*, Hidayati Ernida Hassan Azahari
Fakulti Ekonomi dan Pengurusan,
Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, 43600 UKM,
Bangi Selangor, Malaysia

Saida Farhanah Sarkam
Fakulti Perniagaan Dan Pengurusan
Uitm Melaka, Alor Gajah Campus,
78000 Lendu, Alor Gajah, Melaka, Malaysia

*Pengarang untuk surat menyurat; e-mel: azisma12@
ukm.edu.my

Diserahkan: 11 Oktober 2018
Diterima: 22 November 2018